

The Report of the University Commission

THE Commissioners appointed by the Provincial Government to enquire into the recent University troubles have presented their report and the Government has allowed the early publication of some of their conclusions in regard to the matters investigated. They find that the articles in the students' organ, *The Varsity*, of which complaint was made, were "offensive and entirely beyond the line of fair comment upon the matters with which they professed to deal," and that the University Council and the University College Council were within their jurisdiction in dealing with its editor, Mr. Tucker, as they did, although they think that the University Council would have acted more consistently had it, instead of suspending the editor, withdrawn all the University privileges enjoyed by the paper. They state that "there is no foundation for any charge, or even suspicion, that the Chancellor, the Hon. Edward Blake, used his influence to have the appointment of Professor Wrong made, or that he, in any way, interfered about it," and they fully approve of the action of the University Council in dealing as they did with the Political Science Association, and in respect to the control of the Students' Union Building. They further find that the students completely failed to show any justification for their statement that President Loudon is unworthy of confidence or of belief, and in regard to the alleged infringements of the rights of the students they state that "they deem it their duty to express the opinion they have formed, based upon the evidence given by the students themselves, and the views by them freely expressed from the witness stand, viz., that in the past there has existed on the part of students, to say the least of it, a misconception as to the scope and proper construction of the statutes regulating discipline in the University, and the real position the students should, and do, occupy with reference to the Councils of the University and College and the degree of obedience that they are bound to render to the regulations of the University authorities." The final finding of the Commissioners is that "they see no reason for apprehension as to the future of the University of Toronto, nor for any fear that the wonderful increase in the number of its alumni during the past five years will suffer a check."

To any one who attended the sessions of the Commission these conclusions will appear justified by the evidence offered. Whether the Commissioners were justified in asserting that "there was a want of tact in dealing with the students at certain points during these troubles," must remain undecided with those who heard the chief undergraduate officer of the Students' Literary Society declare that the students' rights taken away from them were those of hustling, hazing, singing in the class rooms and other objectionable practices, and the President of the Political Science Association maintain that the promise, the non-fulfilment of which started the troubles, was not a binding one, while another officer of the same Society who was rusticated for a year for bringing note books into the examination hall stated that President London was unworthy of belief. It would appear as if the cause of the troubles were a want, not of tact, but of the finer sense of honour amongst some of the leading students. What tact could have averted the boycott which the students swore was directed against the Government and not against the Faculty or against the President? Was there lack of tact shown in the dismissal of Professor Dale concerning which the Commissioners hint that the Government could not have acted otherwise than they did? Was there a lack of tact evinced in dealing with Mr. Tucker who expressly announced to the University Council that he assumed the office of editor of *The Varsity* for the purpose of carrying out the wishes of the students in opposition to the commands of the Council? In what way could any college officer deal successfully with a student who, in his fanatical adherence to one idea, claimed the right to criticize the actions of the College authorities in a way which the commissioners regard as "offensive and entirely beyond the line of fair comment?" We confess that we are unable to answer these questions, and in regard to tact influencing the actions and sentiments of students, we might quote the statement of C. K. Adams, ex-President of Cornell University, that "many a college officer has found to his sorrow that a class meeting is capable of infinite folly." Perhaps President Angell, of the University of Michigan, a State institution, in many respects like our own Provincial University, has had an experience of college government suffi-

cient to vindicate his opinions, and yet he says of college students than "though not vicious, they may be thoughtless, and are often carried away in a whirl of temporary excitement to words and acts which they soon after condemn. What is wise treatment of young men in these moods is not always easy to say." It would, indeed, have been a service of great value to the University Council had the Commission pointed out in what matters a lack of tact had been displayed, and it would have been interesting also to have its views in regard to an unwieldy body, such as the University Council is, attempting to govern students through an officer who has no powers but that of a chairman, and who, if he possesses tact, has had no opportunity of displaying it.

Perhaps this feature of the report is the only unsatisfactory one and if it is remembered that but one member of the commission had any academic connection, it will appear difficult to imagine how it could have been otherwise. They are averse to the principle of self-government amongst the students and they appear to consider that a Students' Council, standing between the Faculty on the one hand and the students on the other, would be a continual cause of friction. They seem to think that there should be a stronger bond of sympathy between the students and the authorities and we heartily agree with them in this; but it is difficult to see in what way this sympathy may be created when four different and equally independent bodies share the control of twelve hundred students and when the unwise action of any one of these bodies may throw the whole machinery of government out of gear. When, as the report of the Commission itself shows, there was a widespread misconception as to the powers of the Councils, both amongst the students and the Faculty, there is, to a certain extent, an excuse for the thoughtless action of a mass of inexperienced students, but this very excuse condemns the constitution of the University which permits such a confusion.

It is greatly to be regretted that the Commissioners found no opportunity for inquiring into the constitution of the University. They have, however, forwarded to the Government the suggestions of the two Councils and Professor Goldwin Smith's views on the subject. If the report should be published in full, perhaps the facts brought out in the investigation may prepare the public mind for the consideration of a change in the government of the University as will make the machinery simpler, easier of action, less liable to be affected by the caprice of a group of either the students or of the Faculty, and at the same time permit the establishment of a bond of sympathy between the sober and thoughtful portion of the student body and the Faculty.

The part that the students of the Political Science Course played in all the late troubles was quite clear, but the evidence of Mr. Greenwood brought this out very markedly. He gave a list, thirty-one in all, of the speakers who addressed the student mass meeting at which the boycott was organized, of which twenty-one were students in the Political Science Course. When asked why so large a proportion came from one department, which does not contain more than one-eighth of the students in the Arts Faculty, he stated that he thought the majority of such students were intending to study law and that they were exercising themselves as a preparation. If this represents the matter correctly, it reveals a serious situation. Why should raw youths, anxious to "spout" and agitate, have their tendencies accentuated by a course of study which should be permitted only to adults of riper years? It would serve the purposes of the State better if these and other students were to receive annually a course of instruction on the *savoir-faire*, not of politics and agitations, but of ordinary, everyday life, in which also the *savoir-vivre* might be incidentally taught. The late master of Balliol College, Dr. Jowett, was in the habit of addressing his students on these things, and if English students are as raw as Canadian ones, his course of action was abundantly justified. One is tempted to wish there were a dozen Jowetts in Canadian collegiate life to increase the amount of sweet reasonableness in students.

We believe the report of the Commission will do much good and venture to hope that it will receive that careful attention which all University matters should receive from the public. Upon the students themselves, we believe, the greatest effect will be observed, and in all probability they will take greater heed of the character of their leaders in the future. If this result should obtain, then the University of Toronto may henceforth be free from these troubles which come from obdurate and perverse human nature. X,